Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in this application:

Claim 1 (currently amended): A computer-implemented method for determining an optimal award schedule for at least partial satisfaction of a requisition, said method comprising:

receiving from a buyer, over a computer network, ~~requirements~~public buyer constraints representative of said requisition;

receiving from the buyer, over said computer network, a ~~specified~~ objective function including non-price criteria;

transmitting to a set of ~~prospective~~ suppliers, over said computer network, said ~~requirements~~public buyer constraints;

receiving from each ~~candidate~~ supplier ~~from a set of candidate suppliers~~, over said computer network, a bid responsive to said ~~requirements~~public buyer constraints~~, said set of candidate suppliers originating from said set of prospective suppliers~~; and

utilizing, by a programmed computer, the ~~specified~~objective function to select a subset of suppliers ~~from said set of candidate suppliers~~ and determine an optimal award schedule for at least partial satisfaction of said requisition utilizing the selected ~~subset of~~ suppliers,

wherein said optimal award schedule includes information indicative of the manner in which each of said selected subset of suppliers is to at least partially satisfy said requisition.

Claim 2 (currently amended): The method of claim 1, wherein receiving said ~~requirements~~public buyer constraints from said buyer over said computer network comprises receiving a list of items to be supplied.

Claim 3 (previously presented): The method of claim 2, wherein receiving said list of items comprises receiving a list in which at least one item in said list is a logical item that includes a list of items.

Claim 4 (currently amended): The method of claim 1, wherein receiving said ~~requirements~~public buyer constraints from said buyer over said network comprises receiving a ~~requirement~~constraint

selected from the group consisting of: a maximum price said buyer is willing to pay for at least partial satisfaction of said requisition; and a non-price ~~requirement~~constraint required by said buyer for at least partial satisfaction of said requisition.

Claim 5 (currently amended): The method of claim 4, wherein said non-price ~~requirement~~constraint is selected from the group consisting of: a desired time for at least partial satisfaction of said requisition; a desired quality for at least partial satisfaction of said requisition; and a desired quantity for at least partial satisfaction of said requisition.

Claim 6 (currently amended): The method of claim 1, wherein receiving said bid from each ~~candidate~~ supplier over said computer network comprises receiving a bid including a proposed price for at least partial satisfaction of said requisition.

Claim 7 (currently amended): The method of claim 1, wherein receiving said bid from each ~~candidate~~ supplier over said computer network comprises receiving a bid including a proposed price having a volume discount dependent on an extent to which said requisition is to be at least partially satisfied.

Claim 8 (currently amended): The method of claim 1, wherein receiving said bid from each ~~candidate~~ supplier over said computer network comprises receiving a bid including a fixed charge independent of an extent to which said requisition is to be at least partially satisfied.

Claim 9 (currently amended): The method of claim 1, wherein receiving said bid from each ~~candidate~~ supplier over said computer network comprises receiving a bundled bid offering to at least partially satisfy, for a bundled price, a requisition for a selection of items from said list of items.

Claim 10 (currently amended): The method of claim 1, further comprising facilitating an exchange of messages between a buyer and a ~~candidate~~ supplier over said computer network.

Claim 11 (currently amended): The method of claim 10, further comprising facilitating the multi-casting of a message sent by said buyer to all ~~candidate~~ suppliers over said computer network.

Claim 12 (previously presented): The method of claim 1, wherein determining an optimal award schedule comprises considering a performance attribute for a ~~candidate~~ supplier.

Claim 13 (previously presented): The method of claim 12, wherein considering a performance attribute comprises selecting an attribute from the group consisting of: the supplier's reputation for prompt delivery, the supplier's reputation for quality, geographical location of the supplier, the supplier's reputation for support and maintenance, and a user-defined attribute.

Claim 14 (previously presented): The method of claim 12, wherein considering a performance attribute comprises considering a weight supplied by said buyer, said weight being indicative of an extent to which said performance attribute is to be considered in determining said optimal award schedule.

Claim 15 (previously presented): The method of claim 14, wherein considering a performance attribute comprises determining a price penalty on the basis of said weight and incorporating said price penalty in a bid received from said ~~candidate~~ supplier.

Claim 16 (currently amended): The method of claim 1, wherein determining an optimal award schedule comprises applying a ~~requirement that was not known to the candidate suppliers~~ private buyer constraint.

Claim 17 (currently amended): The method of claim 16, wherein applying the ~~unknown requirement~~ private buyer constraint comprises applying a business rule.

Claim 18 (previously presented): The method of claim 17, wherein applying a business rule comprises selecting a business rule from the group consisting of: a business rule placing a limit on the number of selected suppliers, a business rule specifying properties of said selected suppliers, a business rule placing a limit on the number of items provided by a selected suppliers, a business rule placing a limit on the number of items provided by a cluster of selected suppliers, and a business rule placing a limit on an extent to which a selected supplier at least partially satisfies said requisition.

Claim 19 (previously presented): The method of claim 18, wherein placing a limit comprises selecting a limit from the group consisting of an upper bound and a lower bound.

Claim 20 (previously presented): The method of claim 18, wherein the extent to which a selected supplier satisfies said requisition is measured by a monetary value of said extent.

Claim 21 (currently amended): The method of claim 16, wherein applying the ~~unknown requirement~~ private buyer constraint comprises rejecting any bundled bid.

Claim 22 (currently amended): The method of claim 16, wherein applying the ~~unknown requirement~~ private buyer constraint comprises manually selecting a supplier for inclusion in said list of selected suppliers.

Claim 23 (currently amended): The method of claim 22, wherein applying the ~~unknown requirement~~ private buyer constraint further comprises manually specifying an extent to which said manually selected supplier is to at least partially satisfy said requisition.

Claim 24 (currently amended): The method of claim 1, further comprising generating by a computer a code indicative of at least one reason for rejecting a losing bid.

Claim 25 (previously presented): The method of claim 24, wherein generating said code comprises incorporating into said code information indicative of whether said losing bid was rejected on the basis of a reason selected from a group consisting of an excessive price and an inadequate performance attribute.

Claim 26 (previously presented): The method of claim 1, further comprising selecting said requisition from the group consisting of: a purchase of an item, a purchase of a group of items, a performance of a service, and a performance of a group of services.

Claim 27 (currently amended): Computer-readable media having encoded thereon software for determining an optimal award schedule for at least partial satisfaction of a requisition, said software comprising:

  instructions for receiving from a buyer, over a computer network, ~~requirements~~public buyer constraints representative of said requisition;

  instructions for receiving from the buyer, over said computer network, a ~~specified~~ objective function including non-price criteria;

  instructions for transmitting to a set of ~~prospective~~suppliers, over said computer network, said ~~requirements~~public buyer constraints;

  instructions for receiving from each ~~candidate~~supplier ~~from a set of candidate suppliers~~, over said computer network, a bid responsive to said ~~requirements~~public buyer

constraints, ~~said set of candidate suppliers originating from said set of prospective~~
~~suppliers~~;

instructions for utilizing the ~~specified~~ objective function to select a subset of suppliers
~~from said set of candidate suppliers~~ and determine an optimal award schedule for at
least partial satisfaction of said requisition utilizing the selected ~~subset of~~ suppliers,

wherein said optimal award schedule includes information indicative of the manner in
which each of said selected suppliers is to at least partially satisfy said requisition.

Claim 28 (currently amended): The computer-readable media of claim 27, wherein said
instructions for receiving said ~~requirements~~public buyer constraints from said buyer over said
computer network comprise instructions for receiving a list of items to be supplied.

Claim 29 (previously presented): The computer-readable media of claim 28, wherein said
instructions for receiving said list of items comprise instructions for receiving a list in which at
least one item in said list is a logical item that includes a list of items.

Claim 30 (currently amended): The computer-readable media of claim 27, wherein said
instructions for receiving said ~~requirements~~ public buyer constraints from said buyer over said
network comprise instructions for receiving a ~~requirement~~ constraint selected from the group
consisting of: a maximum price said buyer is willing to pay for at least partial satisfaction of said
requisition; and a non-price ~~requirement~~ constraint required by said buyer for at least partial
satisfaction of said requisition.

Claim 31 (currently amended): The computer-readable media of claim 30, wherein said non-price
~~requirement~~ constraint is selected from the group consisting of: a desired time for at least partial
satisfaction of said requisition; a desired quality for at least partial satisfaction of said requisition;
and a desired quantity for at least partial satisfaction of said requisition.

Claim 32 (currently amended): The computer-readable media of claim 27, wherein said
instructions for receiving said bid from each ~~candidate~~ supplier over said computer network
comprise instructions for receiving a bid including a proposed price for at least partial
satisfaction of said requisition.

Claim 33 (currently amended): The computer-readable media of claim 27, wherein said instructions for receiving said bid from each ~~candidate~~ supplier over said computer network comprise instructions for receiving a bid including a proposed price having a volume discount dependent on an extent to which said requisition is to be at least partially satisfied.

Claim 34 (currently amended): The computer-readable media of claim 27, wherein said instructions for receiving said bid from each ~~candidate~~ supplier over said computer network comprise instructions for receiving a bid including a fixed charge independent of an extent to which said requisition is to be at least partially satisfied.

Claim 35 (currently amended): The computer-readable media of claim 28, wherein said instructions for receiving said bid from each ~~candidate~~ supplier over said computer network comprise instructions for receiving a bundled bid offering to at least partially satisfy, for a bundled price, a requisition for a selection of items from said list of items.

Claim 36 (currently amended): The computer-readable media of claim 27, wherein said software further comprises instructions for facilitating an exchange of messages between a buyer and a ~~candidate~~ supplier over said computer network.

Claim 37 (currently amended): The computer-readable media of claim 36, wherein said software further comprises instructions for facilitating the multi-casting of a message sent by said buyer to all ~~candidate~~ suppliers over said computer network.

Claim 38 (previously presented): The computer-readable media of claim 27, wherein said instructions for determining an optimal award schedule comprise instructions for considering a performance attribute for a ~~candidate~~ supplier.

Claim 39 (previously presented): The computer-readable media of claim 38, wherein said instructions for considering a performance attribute comprise instructions for selecting an attribute from the group consisting of: the supplier's reputation for prompt delivery, the supplier's reputation for quality, geographical location of the supplier, the supplier's reputation for support and maintenance, and a user-defined attribute.

Claim 40 (previously presented): The computer-readable media of claim 38, wherein said instructions for considering a performance attribute comprise instructions for considering a

weight supplied by said buyer, said weight being indicative of an extent to which said performance attribute is to be considered in determining said optimal award schedule.

Claim 41 (previously presented): The computer-readable media of claim 40, wherein said instructions for considering a performance attribute comprise instructions for determining a price penalty on the basis of said weight and incorporating said price penalty in a bid received from said ~~candidate~~ supplier.

Claim 42 (currently amended): The computer-readable media of claim 27, wherein said instructions for determining an optimal award schedule comprise instructions for applying a ~~requirement that was not known to the candidate suppliers~~ private buyer constraint.

Claim 43 (currently amended): The computer-readable media of claim 42, wherein said instructions for applying private buyer constraint ~~the unknown requirement~~ comprise instructions for applying a business rule.

Claim 44 (previously presented): The computer-readable media of claim 43, wherein said instructions for applying a business rule comprise instructions for selecting a business rule from the group consisting of: a business rule placing a limit on the number of selected suppliers, a business rule specifying properties of said selected suppliers, a business rule placing a limit on the number of items provided by a selected suppliers, a business rule placing a limit on the number of items provided by a cluster of selected suppliers, and a business rule placing a limit on an extent to which a selected supplier at least partially satisfies said requisition.

Claim 45 (previously presented): The computer-readable media of claim 44, wherein said instructions for placing a limit comprise instructions for selecting a limit from the group consisting of an upper bound and a lower bound.

Claim 46 (previously presented): The computer-readable media of claim 44, further comprising instructions for measuring the extent to which a selected supplier satisfies said requisition by measured by a monetary value of said extent.

Claim 47 (currently amended): The computer-readable media of claim 42, wherein said instructions for applying the private buyer constraint ~~unknown requirement~~ comprise instructions for rejecting any bundled bid.

Claim 48 (currently amended): The computer-readable media of claim 42, wherein said instructions for applying the <u>private buyer constraint</u>unknown requirement comprise instructions for enabling manual selection of a supplier for inclusion in said list of selected suppliers.

Claim 49 (currently amended): The computer-readable media of claim 48, wherein said instructions for applying the <u>private buyer constraint</u>unknown requirement further comprise instructions for enabling manual specification of an extent to which said manually selected supplier is to at least partially satisfy said requisition.

Claim 50 (currently amended): The computer-readable media of claim 27, wherein said software further comprises instructions for generating by a computer a code indicative of at least one reason for rejecting a losing bid.

Claim 51 (previously presented): The computer-readable media of claim 50, wherein said instructions for generating said code comprise instructions for incorporating into said code information indicative of whether said losing bid was rejected on the basis of a reason selected from a group consisting of an excessive price and an inadequate performance attribute.

Claim 52 (previously presented): The computer-readable media of claim 27, wherein said software further comprises instructions for selecting said requisition from the group consisting of: a purchase of an item, a purchase of a group of items, a performance of a service, and a performance of a group of services.

Claim 53 (cancelled).